DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 580 FL 004 696

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TITLE Origin and Development of Papiamento.
PUB DATE Jul 70
NOTE 19p.; Paper prepared for the Area Linguistics Seminar, Ohio State University, Columbus, July 1970

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS African Languages; Bibliographies; *Creoles; Descriptive Linguistics; *Diachronic Linguistics; Dutch; Language Usage; Lexicology; Phonology; Portuguese; Pronouns; *Social Dialects; Spanish; *Synchronic Linguistics; Syntax; Tables (Data); Verbs; Vocabulary
IDENTIFIERS Netherlands Antilles; *Papiamento

ABSTRACT

This paper concerns the development of Papiamento, a creole language spoken in Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao, islands off the coast of Venezuela. The contributions of each of the languages which influenced its development--Portuguese, African languages, Spanish, and Dutch--are examined in successive sections of the paper, with a concluding portion devoted to Modern Papiamento and its social dialects. Tables comparing tense markers and personal pronouns are included, as well as a bibliography of references. (DD)

ED 082580

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF PAPIAMENTO

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July 1970

FL 004 696

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Papiamento is the language of the Netherlands Antilles, the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, which lie off the coast of Venezuela. Although Dutch is the official language and is taught in school and used in government, almost all of the 200,000 inhabitants of these islands consider Papiamento to be their native language. Because of the blending of vocabulary and syntax from Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and West African languages, Papiamento has come to be of considerable interest to linguists studying the process of creolization and the African substratum influence in creoles.

There is much variance of opinion concerning the origins and composition of Papiamento. (The name is believed to be derived from an old Romance verb "papiar" meaning "to speak" plus a Portuguese nominalizing suffix "-mento".) Before pidgin and creole languages became a respectable area of study, writers -- with varying degrees of linguistic awareness -- simply dismissed Papiamento as "corrupt Spanish", "a mixture of Dutch, Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, Indian and African", and "a mixture of Spanish and Dutch". (van Wijk, 1958, p. 169). Perhaps the oldest difinition of Papiamento comes from Father Schabel living in Venezuela about 1704 who wrote that the black slaves on Curaçao spoke a kind of broken Spanish.

The original language of the Antilles and the neighboring coast of South America belonged to the Arowak Maipure family and was spoken by the Caiquetio tribe of Indians. Practically all trace of this language was lost as the Indians died out during Spanish occupation of the islands.

Portuguese Pidgin

Although the Spanish incorporated the islands into their empire in 1527, they were of little importance to them, and the Dutch were able to take possession of the three islands with no resistance in 1634. The Dutch, who were interested in them for strategic purposes, transferred the Spanish and the few surviving Indians to Venezuela. By 1695 the remaining Indians who had been kept by the Dutch as slaves had all died, and the Dutch began importing African slaves to replace them. These Africans were bought from the colonies the Portuguese had established along the West African coast during the 15th century. Some of the Africans had been raised in these slave trading areas while others had been brought there from the African interior. Because the native languages of these groups of people were, for the most part, mutually unintelligable, the general means of communication among themselves and among them and the slave traders was an Afro-Portuguese pidgin, which they adapted to the phonetic, syntactic and morphological characteristics of their own languages. (van Wijk, 1958, p. 171).

It has also been documented by sea captains such as Menkman and Nettlebeck, who were involved in the Dutch slave trade, that they had to speak the Portuguese-based pidgin* in order to communicate with the Africans. Thus, both the slaves and the traders arrived in Curaçao speaking the pidgin. The year 1647 when Governor Peter Stuyvesant turned Curaçao into the slave trading center for the West Indies can be regarded as the start of the evolution from the pidgin to Papiamento. (van Wijk, 1958, p. 172).

Although there are no long texts in the pidgin, it is possible to

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* Pidgins and creoles are traditionally distinguished as English-based, Portuguese-based, etc. This term refers to the language from which they draw the major part of their lexicon.

gain an idea of its outstanding features by examining some of the colonial and slave trade documents from the 15th and 16th centuries as well as comparing modern Portuguese creoles such as those, for example, on the Cape Verde Islands, on Maccao and St. Thomas and in Goa. (See Table I, p. 15, for a comparason of verbal particles.) Although it seems apparent that the original pidgin did not exist in a completely stable form, it did have a basic unity, for the farther back in time the creoles are traced, the more they resemble each other. (Valkhoff, 1966, p. 62). The following is an outline of the changes brought about in Portuguese by Europeans, Africans and Asians during the pidginization process: (Valkhoff, 1966, p. 62).

1. Loss of final /r/. avisar > avisa
2. Weakening of medial /r/ and possible replacement by /l/. agora > agola
3. Depalatalization or loss of the palatal /l/. engalhar > engala
4. Dipthongs tended to become monophthongs. azeite > azeti
5. Final /e/ became /i/. doce > doci
6. Loss of plurality or creation of a new plural marker through reduplication, the use of "much" or "many" before the noun, or the suffixation of "they" to the noun.
   China-China, "Chinese people"
   masiao porco, "many pig" or "pigs"
   pescadó-ês, "fisherman-they" or "fishermen"
7. Loss of the definite article.
8. Personal pronouns used as possessive pronouns after the noun.
   tempo-bô, "your time" tempo-nos, "our time"
9. Absence of verbal inflections.
10. New tenses and modes formed with preposed verbal particles. (Portuguese pidgin may originally have had a five tense-

mode-aspect system although its exact nature is uncertain. Macanese, Haitian and Jamaican seem to preserve remanants of it in their verbal systems. There may also have been a past imperfect distinct from the perfect, and Papiamento's perfective particle "taba" seems to suggest that its system may have been derived from an earlier system which included both "taba" and "va". (Whinnom, 1965, p. 523).)

Ø + V = habitual or past

ta + V = progressive

ya + V = past

logo + V = future

nadi + V = nagative future

11. Mo (modo, "manner") used to mean "as".

12. Reduction of unaccented vowels. sorda sord , ate te

One might expect that on Curaçao the pidgin would soon have fallen under the influence of Dutch, but except for lexical borrowings this apparently did not happen for several reasons. As mentioned before, the slave traders knew the pidgin, and the Dutch military and civil authorities on Curaçao were first stationed in Brazilian outposts where they learned to speak that variety of Portuguese. Furthermore, the plantation owners knew at least enough of the slaves' language to be able to communicate with them in it, and the rapid growth of the black population increased the speech community which in turn gave them a feeling of identity with the creole. Another possible reinforcement for speaking a Portuguese creole in Curaçao was that twenty years after the Dutch took over the island there was a large influx of Portuguese Jews expelled from Brazil because of the Inquisition.

African Influence

It can be assumed that the creole being spoken at this time contained many African influences in both structure and vocabulary. However, many of these dropped out as the language underwent a gradual process of de-Africanization. Not only did the Portuguese speaking Jews contribute to this process, but also the Africans themselves were involved. While the arrival of new shiploads of slaves retarded de-Africanization, at the same time the black population on the island was losing contact with Africa and forgetting the old Africanisms. Furthermore, the diversity of African languages brought into Curaçao was a serious obstacle for conserving African words. (van Wijk, 1958, p. 173). Certain features remain, however, which can be attributed to African influence since they are not characteristic of Portuguese, Dutch or Spanish (which later had great influence on Papiamento). These features are also widespread throughout creole languages both in the West Indies and in the Orient, a fact which has led some linguists to posit an African substratum underlying all these creoles. Whether or not this is true, and whether it is also true that the creoles are derived from a West African Portuguese pidgin base as some claim, it is apparent that they do share many common structural and phonological characteristics and that they do in fact constitute a widespread sprachbünde.

In the morphology of Papiamento there is only one word which appears to be of African origin, and that is the third person plural pronoun "nan". There are no forms in Portuguese, Dutch or Spanish from which it logically could be derived. Comparason with two other Portuguese creoles reveal analogous forms: St. Thomas "inem, nem", and Anabon "inẽn". (See Table II, p.16 , for comparason of other forms) and it is plausible that the Portuguese third person plural, "elles", had lost its

inflection, /s/, and was confused with the singular "elle" so that an entirely different word of African origin was used to complete the system. (Lenz, 1928, p. 186). Lenz also suggests that "nan, inem, nem" and "inẽ" could have come from the Angolan word for third plural, "ênе, ana", which could be historically possible since by 1600 the chief slave producing areas were the Bantu regions called the Congo and Angola which extended roughly from the Congo River to the Longa River. (Le Page, 1960, p. 51).

In looking at Table III, p. 16, and comparing it with Table II it can also be seen that forms such as (a)mi and (a)bo were reinforced by analagous forms in several West African languages.

Certain aspects of the phonology of Papiamento seem to have undergone African influences, also. (The following examples are taken from van Wijk, 1958, pp. 174-175, and Lenz, 1928, pp. 81-84. Lenz takes many of his examples from 19th century documents written in or about Papiamento drawing heavily on the writings of and conversations with Natividad Sillie, a black author of Curaçao in the early 1900's.) All the influences cited here will pertain not only to Portuguese, but also to Spanish vocabulary items, and some of the Papiamento examples will be words of Spanish origin. The Spanish influence will be dealt with in the next section.

The occurance of nasality is frequently mentioned as one example of African influence since most of the West Coast African languages have this feature. While it is also present in Portuguese, the domain of nasality was extended in Papiamento to include any vowels occuring near a nasal consonant. In some cases words of Portuguese origin have had nasal consonants inserted after nasal vowels and there are also instances of oral consonants becoming nasals when a nasal occurs in

either the preceeding or following syllable. The contrast oral/nasal vowel is not distinctive, however, in Papiamento.

fũmĩnga < formiga cheese

nẽnga < negar to deny

prĩmĩnti < prometter to promise

nãnĩšĩ < nariz nose

lãmãntá < levantar to get up

Another possible African influence can be seen in the tendency towards vowel harmony within words.

rosponde < responde to reply

sosodi < suceder to succeed

nogoši < negocio business

Another Papiamento characteristic which is not permitted in Spanish of Portuguese and is attributed to Africa is the combination /s/ + C(C). In the two Romance languages such a combination requires an initial prothetic /e/.

stroba < estorbar to hinder

spanta < espantar to pant

sklama < esclamar to cry out

strea < estrella star

Palatalization of the clusters /di/ and /si/ occured early in the development of papiamento. /di/ > /ǰ/, and /si/ > /š/.

šelo < cileo sky

ǰa < dia day

kušina < cocina kitchen

ǰes < diez ten

atenšon < atencion attention (This phenomenon occurs in all words with -cion endings.)

There was also the tendency to add an initial aspirated /h/ to words beginning with a vowel in the original Portuguese.

habri < abrir to open

haltu < alto high

hasa < asar to roast

hunta < untar to grease

henter < entero whole

Both Lenz and van Wijk claim that this phenomenon is a consequence of an areal West African trait which generally does not permit vowels in work initial position. However, they do not cite any specific languages, and the above statement does not pertain to Yoruba or Igbo, for example. Furthermore, since the addition of /h/ does not appear to be a widespread occurance in Papiamento, this instance of African influence is, to say the least, inconclusive.

Aside from "nan", there are very few vocabulary words which can be attributed to an African source. Lenz suggests several: "makutu", a large basket; "karpusa", halter; "sambarku", sandal; "mãmãna", the name of a tropical fruit, but does not derive them from any specific languages. In a word count, based on Hoyer's dictionary, Woordenlijst en Samenspraak hollandsch-papiamentsch-spaanch, he lists only 73 words out of 2500 as of doubtful origin and indicates that they may be from Africa.

As for structural influences it is obvious that certain ones such as the loss of inflection and the creation of a new verbal system based on an invariable word-base modified by particles to express aspect, mood or tense probably resulted from contact with African language speakers. (cf. Table I). These structural peculiarities are two of the areal characteristics of West African languages which played a part

in the creation of pidgin and creole grammars. A detailed syntactic comparason between Papiamento and an African language, possible Igbo, Yoruba or an Angolian dialect, spoken by the majority of the slaves captured by the Portuguese and eventually shipped to Curaçao still needs to be done. Undoubtedly this would produce many more substratum influences than have been mentioned here.

Introduction of Spanish

Until recently Papiamento, because of the high number of Spanish words in its vocabulary, was considered the only Carribean creole of Spanish origin. It was first proclaimed a Spanish creole in 1869 by Addison van Name writing for the American Philological Association. He thought that the Spanish learned by the slaves gradually evolved into Papiamento during two centuries of isolation on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao. However, as has been seen, the Dutch eliminated the Spanish influence and introduced via the slaves and the slave traders the Afro-Portuguese pidgin which became the primary means of communication on the islands. Near the end of the 17th century Spanish was introduced by missionaries from the Spanish colonies who were quite influential in converting the slaves to Catholocism. Their presence, in addition to trade relationships established with neighboring Spanish colonies had much influence on Papiamento during the 18th century, while in the 19th century many Venezuelan and Columbian businessmen transferred their residences and businesses to Curacao for politican and economic reasons.

Spanish enjoyed enormous prestige and the effect on Papiamento was, as could be expected, mainly in the realm of vocabulary and phonology. The structure of the creole, having been stabilized by this time remained basically unaffected. Many words dealing with abstract notions and commerce were incorporated into the lexicon,

and a great number of Papiamento words were replaced by Spanish ones. It is, of course, difficult to tell in many instances if a particular word was taken from Spanish or Portuguese. (For some examples of this see Table IV, p. 17.) Lenz, based on his own etymologies of the words in Hoyer's dictionary, claims that out of 2500 words 1575 can be of either Spanish or Portuguese origin, and of these 925 are most likely to be Spanish and 50 to be Portuguese. (Lenz, 1928, p. 210). He arrives at such a conservative number of Portuguese items since he lists as Portuguese only those Papiamento words which correspond phonetically to Portuguese ones, or those which are common in Portuguese and rare in Spanish. In the latter category are words like "bira", to turn, which Lenz derives from Portuguese "virar" since Spanish "virar" is used only as a nautical term.

On the phonetic level there were also many changes. An initial /f/ was replaced by a weakly aspirated /h/ or was dropped:

heru < ferro (Port.), influenced by hierro (Span.) iron

(h)asi < fazar (Port.), influenced by hacer (Span.) to do

Other examples of partial assimilation to Spanish phonology are (van Wijk, 1958, p. 117).

harinja < farinha (Port.) through harina (Span.) flour

donjo < donho (Port.) through dueño (Span.) owner

palomba < pomba (Port.) through paloma (Span.) dove

Further palatalization was introduced. The Portuguese cluster /-it-/ became /-č-/, as in "oču", eight, form Portuguese "oito" and Spanish "ocho"; and "nuči", night, from Portuguese "noite" and Spanish "noche". (van Wijk, 1958, p. 176).

Spanish dipthongs /ue/ and /ie/ began to appear. Until Spaniards became prominent in the Netherlands Antilles the vowels of Papiamento

were monothongs. (Navarro, 1953, p. 189)

nuebe < nove (Port.) through nueve (Span.) new

wesu < osso (Port.) through hueso (Span.) bone

piedra < pedra (port) through piedra (Span.) stone

Dutch Influence

Aside from introducing vocabulary words, most of which pertained to domestic items, Dutch had relatively little influence until around the end of the 19th century when the Dutch administrators established public schools taught in that language. Another factor was the location on Curaçao of several Dutch petroleum companies whose business transactions were conducted in Dutch. Again, it is in the areas of phonology and the lexicon that changes occured.

Of the Dutch words brought into the vocabulary many have been technical and administrative terms, mostly nouns and verbs, although one execption is the adjective "hopi", much or many. According to Lenz's word analysis 1040, or 30%, of the 2500 words in Hoyer's dictionary were of Dutch origin; however, most of these were used rarely. On the basis of popular writings and conversations, he calculated that only 1% to 3% of everyday words were Dutch. (Lenz, 1928, p. 210). Nouns were usually incorporated into the vocabulary unchanged while verbs lost their infinitive endings or had them replaced by /-a/ or /-er/: (van Wijk, 1958, p. 178).

waker < waaken to watch

hap < gapen to yawn

lur < loeren to prick

jom < zomen to play cards

baster < barsten to blow up

konopa < knoper to tie

fula < voelen to feel

Certain hybred forms were created by taking the Dutch word and adding a Spanish or Portuguese ending:

driementu < drainen (Dutch) + -mentu (Port.) a turn

mopermentu < mopperen (Dutch) + -mentu a complaint

ferfdo < verven (Dutch) + -dor (Port. or Span.) a painter

drukdor < drukken (Dutch) + -dor printer

Calques began occuring in which words of Romance origin were substituted in Dutch structures: "Mi no por yuda", I can't help it, for the Dutch "Ik kan het niet helpen". "Sina", to teach, became extended to mean, also, to learn, like the Dutch "leren". (van Wijk, 1958, p. 178). Occuring also were sets of words from Spanish and Dutch with identical meanings, and in cases where the meanings were not originally identical, they merged. Some examples are

Span. or Port.	Dutch	gloss
cuerda	ver	leather
ekonomisa	spar	economy
imprime	druk	printed
pusa	stot	to push
sedusi	ferlei	to seduce

The Dutch borrowings introduced certain phonemic features which had not previously been part of Papiamento's system and which occur rarely, mainly in the speech of educated people. The sound /x/ (Dutch orthographic "g") came in:

zag saw breg bridge

orgel organ

Certain previously unfamiliar clusters, /kt/, /rx/ and /ft/ appeared, as in "orgel", organ and "befeft", polite. Loans from Dutch intorduced into Papiamento's original five vowel system, /e,i,a,o,u/,

contrasts between open and closed /e/ and /ɛ/, /o/ and /ɔ/, /y/ and /ø/. (Hall, 1966, p. 98-99). Although Hall does not provide any minimal pairs to justify this remark, he lists as examples the following:

/serbes/ beer	/styr/ to steer
/skɛr/ scissors	/xəldə/ gulden
/ʸjyli/ July	

The one syntactical innovation which entered Papiamento via Dutch was the passive construction. Like most creoles Papiamento did not have a passive voice, and it may be that it entered the language through translations of the Bible into Papiamento made by the Protestant Dutch. Lenz found evidence of it only in these translations although it has now become widespread in Papiamento. (Lenz, 1928, p. 130). It is formed by an auxiliary "worde" from the Dutch "worden" which indicates that the agent will be introduced by the preposition "door di" meaning by. This is an interesting preposition, for it is made of the Dutch "door", by, and "di" from the Spanish "de", by or of. Another more common way today of showing the agent is to use "pa", by, before it. For example: "Nos kas lo worde geferf {door di / pa} e miho ferfdo di nos isla", Our house will be painted by the best painter on our island. An alternate construction has been created by substituting the Spanish-based "ser....pa" for "worde....door di", as in "Nos kas lo ser geferf pa e miho ferfdo di nos isla". (van Wijk, 1958, p. 177).

Modern Papiamento

As a result of the diffuse origins and languages of the inhabitants of the Netherlands Antilles, Papiamento today presents three varieties of conversational speech represented by the Hispanized Papiamento

of the descendents of the Safardic Jews, the Papiamento of the Dutch who are in the majority in the Protestant churches, and the Papiamento of the general population, descendants of the slaves, long-time residents of the islands, etc. The two extremes, the Dutch and the Spanish can be exemplified in the following sentence:

Dutch: Si bo let op bon, lo bo merke ku e dos jongelei-nan-ei ta ferlief riba otro.

Spanish: Si bo buta atenson bon, lo bo ripara ku e dos hoben-nan-ei ta namora di otro.

gloss: If you pay attention well, you will see that those two young people are in love with each other.

While the lexical items differ according to the nationality of the speakers, the structural items, underlined in the two sentences, remain constant. These two extremes may not always be mutually intelligible, and the speakers of these two dialects (since they are usually upper class people who have been educated abroad) generally switch to what they consider a more prestigous common language such as English or Dutch when communicating with each other. For them Papiamento is the language of the family and household dealings.

Thus, it seems that the Afro-Portuguese pidgin which functioned as a lingua france along the West African coast was brought to the Netherlands Antilles by the slaves and slave traders and served as the basis for Papiamento. While the basic structure of Papiamento which derived from this pidgin has remained generally unchanged, there have been many influences from Dutch and Spanish in the areas of phonology and vocabulary. In fact, because of the prestige of Spanish, a very high percentage of words in Papiamento appear to be of Spanish origin. Despite the fact that Dutch is the official language, Papiamento is the first language of most of the people and shows no signs of dying out,

Table I

The most striking bond between West Indian and Oriental creoles is their verbal system made up of a single invariable word-base modified by particles.

Creoles	Markers		
	Durative	Perfective	Contingent, Future
Cape Verde	ta	ja	lo
Indo-Portuguese	ta, te	ja	lo, di, nad (negative)
Macao, Malacca & Java	ta	ja	logo, nadi (neg.)
Philippines Spanish Creoles	ta	ya	de, ay
Papiamento	ta	taba	lo
Saramaccan	ta	bi	sa
Sranan, Tongo	de	ben	sa
Jamaican	a, de	ben, min, mi	----
Haitian	ap	te	a
Dominican	ka	te	ke

(Thompson, 1961, p. 109)

Table II

A comparason of personal pronouns in Papiamento and the creoles of St. Thomas, Cape Verde and Anabon. (After Lenz, 1928, p. 185)

	Papiamento	St. Thomas	Cape Verde	Anabon
sg.				
1	(a)mi, mi	(a) mi, amu	mi, (a)min, men	(a)mi
2	(a)bo	bô	(a)bo	vo
3	ele, el, e	ê	el	ele, el
pl.				
1	non	nom	nos	no, no tudu
2	boso(nan)	(i)nance	~nôs	vutru, vo tudu
3	nan	inem, nem	ês	inẽ

Table III

Pronoun forms in several West African languages whose speakers were heavily involved in the West African slave trade. The third person singular has been omitted since it generally consists of a vowel in harmony with the root vowel of the verb. (After Lenz, 1928, p. 186)

	Yoruba	Fante	Twi	Angola
sg.				
1	emi	eme	me	emmi
2	iwo	ewo	wo	eiê
pl.				
1	awa	ehyen	yen	êtu
2	eyi	ehom	mo, hom	enu
3	awo	ewon	won	êne, ana

Table IV

Examples of Papiamento words which could be derived from either Spanish or Portuguese. Judging by vocabulary alone it is very difficult to ascertain whether the language is Portuguese or Spanish-based.

Papiamento	Portuguese	Spanish	gloss
kaba	acabar	acabar	to begin
kas	casa	casa	house
perta	apertar	apretar	to tighten
koba	cova	cueva	cave
kria	criada	criada	maid
pos	poço	pozo	well
mesa	mesa	mese	table
promente	primenta	pimiento	red pepper
laraha	laranja	naranja	orange (fruit)
aseta	azeite	aciete	to guess
lenga	lingua	lengua	tongue, language
una	unha	una	one
sordu	surdo	sordo	deaf
tosa	tussir	toser	cough

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